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Think tank forces alterations in novel

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Washington—The paperback publisher of the best-selling novel "The Spike" has agreed to changes in the book aimed at minimizing fictional references to a left-wing think tank here as a tool of Soviet propaganda.

In an unusual settlement, Avon Books altered the name of the fictional think tank and made other changes in the book at the request of the Institute for Policy Studies, which was threatening a libel suit.

"The authors agreed to do it," said Richard Sugarman, the lawyer for Avon. "We are on the eve of publication without time to determine if any change was really warranted. It was just expedient."

The Washington-based think tank raised no objection last year when "The Spike," written by Arnaud de Borchgrave and Robert Moss, was published in hardback. The novel chronicles a journalist's discovery, over several years, that the Soviets are spreading false information to the press and waging other subversive efforts, partly through a think tank called the Institute for Progressive Reform.

"It's bad fiction, and we just wrote it off as that for a long time," Bill Kaplan, of the Institute for Policy Studies, said. "But then reviews in the *Washington Post*, *The Nation*, *Harper's* and others began making the connection [between the fictional and the real think tanks] for their readers."

"By the time we got around to taking action, the paperback was coming out," Mr. Kaplan

said. More than a million copies of the paperback are being published this month.

"We kept reading everywhere that the book was a thinly veiled attack on the IPS," Richard Sobol, the institute's attorney, said. So in March, he wrote to Avon Books, calling "The Spike" libelous and asking for changes.

After an exchange of letters, Avon agreed to the changes. They include switching the name of the think tank from the Institute for Progressive Reform to the Foundation for Progressive Reform.

Also, the Multinational Institute in the book was changed to the Third World Exchange. And the location of the European satellite of the think tank was transferred from Amsterdam to Brussels. There were "accompanying deletions concerning the locale," IPS said in a statement.